



Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

ICSAA

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
Quarterly Meeting
October 25, 2019
1:30 – 3:30 PM
Franklin Avenue Library
5000 Franklin Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50310

Teleconference instructions:
Conference call in number: 1-866-685-1580
Conference code: 5152813855

Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 1:41 p.m. by chairperson Ahmadu Baba-Singhri

Present: Ahmadu Baba-Singhri, Monica Mead, Negus Imhotep a.k.a. Clair Rudison, Rosalind Fox, Ken Morris, via conference call, San Wong, Ex-officio

Absent: Lynn Sutton, Mathew Gibson

Staff: Kim Cheeks

Visitors: Mgehnleh Dorlae, West Africa, Liberia, resides in Johnston, in Ph.D. program for public policy and administration

Welcome/Introductions

Rosalind Fox, new member to the commission, still learning and trying to figure out where she fits in.

Approve Minutes of June 28, 2019

Motion by Imhotep to accept the minutes of June 28, 2019, second by Fox, approved unanimously.

Financial report

Director Wong reported, the report presented was at the end of fiscal year 2019 and the request for fiscal year 2020 would be status quo. Under the leadership of Monica Stone, she has been successful in bringing in additional funding for projects, etc. We'd also be willing to find partners that will help fund initiatives with similar philosophies as well. She will talk later about some of the projects that are near completion in Community Advocacy and Services (CAS).



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Public Comment

None

Reports

Director / Division / Office

Director Wong continued from earlier, in Monica's absence, explaining the services provided by CAS, such as, keeping track of human rights related issues, technical assistance provided to those who call in with questions, immigration issues in the Asian and Pacific Islander community, communication access, employment, civic engagement, voting rights, inmate issues, etc. The strategies to address these issues cross over into the different offices. In the upcoming year, 2020, the 100th year celebration of the 19th amendment, giving women the right to vote. Status of Women will be planning activities around that. One of the projects will be contributions of African-American women to the 19th amendment. Another project will be the upcoming Census and the importance of underrepresented populations being counted. Discussion about how the commissions could be instrumental in helping communicate the message. Cheeks mentioned an upcoming Complete Count kick-off event in Sioux City where each commission was invited to take part in that could also be duplicated in other cities across the state. The toolkit on the U.S. Census website will be shared. There was mention of the future launch of the Iowa Talent Bank. Director Wong explained it as a technology tool/portal similar to match.com to gather information of potential female individuals to fill vacancies on boards and commissions to balance by gender according to the Iowa gender laws. The site will go live next year.

Due to the shortage of time, Chair Baba-Singhri moved to African Community Discussion under New Business. More members were going to share but were not able to attend the meeting.

Visitor - Mgehnleh Dorlaie, shared some of his specific challenges and experiences with the commission. These are some of the ways households are affected in the African-American community:

- His story is one that many share. He came to this country in 2009 from Liberia, West Africa, and wanted to go to school and improve himself and give meaningful contribution to society, And so he did, fortunately. Currently, has three master's, master's in government and a doctoral candidate at Warren University.
- They find it difficult getting jobs that they are qualified for or that will allow us to professional growth. Challenges faced, you go to the job, you see the position, the requirements, and you are doing similar job like that before or you have the knowledge and the requirement, you got it. And then, when your resume is pulled, you'll get called but the moment the words get out along with the accent, it becomes a different story.
- And sometimes, we joke, I say, don't talk to them on the phone, keep the communication to email. At the end of the day, they make the decision.



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- Has a colleague, who was not able to come today, who has two master's and he's working in a factory, in a place where he did not study for, so his potential is not tapped into.
- And so, he has come today, to let us know and see how we can work around it. He has a family, and wants his little boy and girls to grow good. They're going to school. But at times, finds it difficult to get them into some of the activities in the school, the elementary school. At the end of the day, they are denied the opportunity that their friends have access to and they should have access to all because of my incapacitation to take them there. It's not at will.

Commissioner Fox, asked how could the commission help?

Mr. Dorlaie responded, by helping community connect with employers that will allow them to tap into their potential, being aware of employers who have no diversity and pointing it out, figure out ways to help them "get in the door", and get promotions to top level positions.

Further discussion occurred about gathering stories from individuals to communicate the need for diverse leadership, mentoring opportunities, training and development, economic oppression and employment discrimination. All of which, can be addressed by the commission.

Moved back to Reports

Office report

Cheeks mentioned the written report included in materials for the meeting. She highlighted a couple of items, such as the upcoming Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration to be held on the third Monday in January 2020. The Dept. of Corrections diversity team she is a member, devised and will implement an implicit, explicit bias training for all staff in corrections and community-based corrections. The team previously worked on a disparity policy that has already been implemented in corrections for staff accountability. End of report.

Commissioners

There was a question by new commissioners what to report. Baba-Singhri deferred to Cheeks to clarify. Cheeks explained that each commissioner should turn in a written quarterly report at each meeting that lists what any activities they have done or participated in that addresses any of the issues that are outlined in the ICSAA agenda or strategic plan. She pointed out how it saves time when going through the agenda at the quarterly meetings. It allows time to work on the specific concerns of the black community.

Imhotep – written report submitted

Old Business

Department of Human Rights Board update

Baba-Singhri was not able to attend. Asked director Wong to report. She exclaimed the information given earlier was covered at the board meeting.



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ICSAA Speaker Series next location – Sioux City

Commission discussed the next location date in Sioux City. Clarified the next meeting was in the second (2nd) quarter in December. They thought it would be best to pick a date before the weather turns to snow. Friday, Dec. 13th was chosen as the date. Cheeks will send out the details.

Strategic Action Plan **Reduce unemployment**

Issues

1. Language – job opportunities are advertised for bilingual speakers, however many languages are spoken in Iowa, so there is a need to stress to employers to expand to multilingual skilled individuals
2. Justice system – discussed that Banning the Box is not enough. Baba-Singhri suggests we come up with something more eg. Beyond Ban the Box. He feels that earning a living is a human rights issue.

Black Family Forums

The consensus was to share and discuss the above employment issues at the next community speaking forum in Sioux City on Dec. 13, 2019

New Business

Criminal Justice Reform – discussed how employment, reentry, criminal records etc. affect reform.

African Community Concerns – moved up on the agenda.

Next Meeting

December 13, 2019 in Sioux City, IA

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Imhotep, second by Morris, meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kim Cheeks

Kim Cheeks